

Montana Arts Council

**2009 Artist's Innovation Award for Visual Arts
Application**

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Form

1. **Website address.**
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2. **Which primary medium best describes your artwork?**
Fiber Arts
3. **Describe what innovations you have made in your artwork and/or your process.**

In the last five years I have developed my contemporary native beadwork to a new level of modernity and technical difficulty. My work tells stories by combining maps, signage, mathematical puzzles, and scientific illustration with traditional beading techniques. Incorporating modernity into my beadwork presents narratives that bridge history and currency, function and form, and sacred and profane. My works' modern concepts and imagery bring the relevance lacking in rote reproduction of traditional objects and styles. Abstract visual elements of math, science, and cartography in my pieces are viewed through a contemporary indigenous lens. My interest in medicine and science open up new stories and perspectives not seen before in native beadwork.

The first new forms I developed were sculptural boxes titled collectively Native Voice Boxes. These vessels use beadwork to illustrate the graphic elements in native parfleche hide painting. This versatile box form results in exciting variations, including boxes that are flexible, transformative, and use magnetic closures. Many of the boxes have hidden design elements inside or reveal new imagery as panels shift. These boxes encourage viewers to manipulate and interact with the art piece. Additional forms I favor fall into two categories that enable larger formats and ingenious compositions: two dimensional forms new to native crafts, and modern versions of material culture, primarily clothing and functional containers.

My conceptually innovative work focuses on women's issues, disease and medical topics, and maps and the landscape. Recent works of mine use beadwork to deal with intellectual topics such as sexually transmitted diseases, disruptive effects of disease on native families, and the diaspora of the displaced. My artistic efforts directly confronts the notion of native arts as a static, isolated, or preserved practice. It is precisely the juxtaposition of these abstract and difficult topics with archaic crafts that makes my work compelling. My material choices, primarily beads and wool, reflect the role trade goods played in 19th century tribal arts. I use trade goods as a metaphor for intermarriage, interbreeding, and the exchange of new information and perspective. By using trade goods, especially modern versions of trade goods, I am commenting on the fluidity of traditional arts; beadwork is an ideal media to illustrate this exchange of materials and ideas.

Within the next year I will begin a new series including wall hangings, boxes, retablos, prints and mixed media that will focus on early scientific illustrations of cellular structures. Basic geometry and biology have a universal design and are artistically appealing due to their intrinsic elegance. Mathematicians often refer to particularly good solutions as having a beauty to them; I will emulate this with artistic solutions that embrace rational and logical qualities. This series will combine rational and creative solutions within a contemporary native canon to stunning effect. My finished pieces will utilize native crafts and arts to illustrate the stories of my scientific heroes: Van Leeuwenhoek, Mendel, and Hooke.

4. Describe how the artwork samples you submitted illustrate the evolution of your work.

These photos illustrate the evolution of my work from objects firmly based in historical patterns and forms to more expansive and creative forms. Six Horses Courting Blanket is the first large scale contemporary beadwork I attempted and represented a difficult break with many cultural restrictions concerning the role of beadwork and allowable deviations. My first major exploration with new beadwork techniques and nontraditional patterns and color combinations freed me to work with more daring color and to incorporate designs from mainstream culture.

The New Possibilities Series shows a two examples of my work celebrating native women's accomplishments on equal footing with the warrior accomplishments of historical periods. Ledger style beadwork is usually reserved for masculine exploits, yet here I celebrate native women in positions of authority and pursuing higher education.

Next a variety of boxes; one with moths depicted on the exterior, one that transforms into a latitude and longitude map, and one box that through the use of flexible hinges is able to change shape in multiple directions. This last box with black and white detail is a metaphor for water molecules in different states. My Native Voice Box series has allowed experimentation with color, asymmetry, geometric forms and dynamic forms.

Images nine through fourteen show many forms of wall hangings I created to narrate stories. Molecular to Stellar invokes images of constellations, DNA helices, and the human family as a metaphor of reproduction and genetic malleability. Flora illustrates botanical species used for healing purposes by native women. The large scale maps (all over five feet) use weather symbols and cartography to record human events. The tapestry titled Forced North records in topo map form the route that Chief Charlo's band of the Salish followed when leaving the Bitterroot valley for the last time.

The last six images are all traditional items recreated in contemporary forms. The embellished tee-shirt series act as statements about obesity in the native community and the effects of lost athleticism on a culture with a history of physical prowess. The cradleboard titled Past is Prologue, Salish Style has hidden compartments and photo frames that hold the photo and documents related to the child. The use of velvets and modern materials reflects the effect of trade goods on tribal fashion and aesthetics. My last pieces included in this portfolio is She Sews A Flight of Fancy. This elaborate sewing box with accessories highlights both my white and native background and my intense love affair with hand sewn and embellished crafts. This is a celebration of the spirit taking flight even when the person is sedentary and absorbed in productive activities. Flight of Fancy is a fitting work to illustrate how my own work has taken flight. My work vacillates between humorous and serious, colorful and stark while always maintaining a high standard of craftsmanship. I incorporate riskier ideas and techniques while always keeping one foot firmly rooted in ageless methods and materials.

5. Regarding public access to your work and artwork, describe a low-cost or no-cost activity to take place during the grant cycle that will convey your innovative work and artwork to other Montanans.

A reception planned for the spring of 2010 will highlight sketches and works in progress. The reception will be held at the Zootown Arts Community Center in Missoula, Montana and will be free and open to the public. This reception will include a slide show and lecture featuring design similarities in 19th century beadwork and early scientific illustration of microscopic organisms and cell structure. An exhibit featuring original artworks will be on display during the reception and for some weeks after depending on gallery scheduling.

6. I certify I am a resident of the state of Montana and a Citizen of the United States. (Residency requires having lived in Montana for at least one full year prior to the application deadline.)

Yes

7. I am at least 18 years old.

Yes

8. I am not currently a degree-seeking student (graduate or undergrad) and will not be during the grant period (July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010).

Yes

9. Permission to reprint. I permit MAC to reproduce my artwork images to use for publicity and informational purposes.

Yes

10. I certify that all appropriate release rights were obtained for my artwork. Where applicable, I certify that all appropriate photo rights and permissions have been obtained with regard to images of children's faces associated with recognizable landmarks.
Yes
11. I am not on the Montana Arts Council staff or a member of its current governing body, nor am I connected to them by one degree of relationship by blood, marriage or household.
Yes
12. I certify that all information I have provided is true and understand that submitting this application is the date of consent.
Yes



"Six Horses Courting Blanket"

37"h x 78"w
Beadwork on wool
2005

A large scale courting blanket with horse imagery and landscape elements on trade cloth wool.



"New Possibilities; Women Stepping Forward"

15"h x 17"w x 4"d (each)
Beadwork on wool
2006

Matched pair of possibles bags with ledger-style images of women in headdresses.



"New Possibilities Bags; Graduates"

15"h x 17"w x 4"d (each)
Beadwork on wool
2007

Contemporary possibles bags featuring images of native women graduating from college with the support of their families.



"Night Moths"

2.5"h x 3"w x 2.5"d
Beadwork on wool
2009

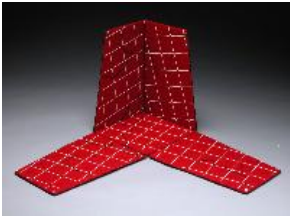
Miniature box in a series that illustrates insect species.



"Trying to Find My Way Home: Lat and Long Map from Missoula to Pine Ridge"

12"h x 8"w x 8"d
Beadwork on wool with magnet closures
2006

Parfleche-style box that opens to a beaded latitude and longitude map.



"Trying to Find My Way Home: Lat and Long Map from Missoula to Pine Ridge (detail)"

12"h x 8"w x 8"d
Beadwork on wool with magnet closures
2006

Parfleche-style box that opens to a beaded latitude and longitude map. Interior view.



"It's All There in Black and White"

7"h x 10"w x 10"d
Beadwork on wool
2007

A transformative box beaded in antique beads on hand-dyed wool. The box changes shape and is a metaphor for water molecules in different states.



"It's All There in Black and White (detail)"

7"h x 10"w x 10"d
Beadwork on wool
2007

This detail shows the box halfway to its changed shape.



"Molecular to Stellar"

38"h x 17"w
Beadwork on wool
2007

Wall tapestry featuring constellations, DNA, and concepts of the infinitely large and the infinitely small.



"Molecular to Stellar (detail)"

38"h x 17"w
Beadwork on wool
2007

Detail of DNA helix featuring beadwork border patterns from traditional moccasins.

**"Flora"**

34"h x 18"w
Beadwork on wool
2007

Tapestry portraying native botanical species used by indigenous women for healing purposes.

**"Out of a Clear Blue Sky"**

90"w x 36"h (dimensions variable)
Beadwork on wool
2008

Triptych that features horse heads as weather symbols for storms such as hurricanes or tornadoes.

**"Forced North"**

62"h x 45"w
Beadwork on wool
2008

Topo map and route of Chief Charlo's band of Salish leaving the Bitterroot Valley.

**"Snakedance"**

62"h x 45"w
Beadwork on wool
2008

Aerial view of snakedance grand entry at Arlee pow wow. Each circle represents an individual dancer.

**"Tribal Size Me III"**

30"h x 35"w
Beadwork on commercial t-shirt
2008

Commercial t-shirt embellished to imitate traditional war shirt.



"Signs in Sacred Colors"

40"h x 4"w (dimensions variable)
Beadwork
2008

Beaded belt in a set of pow wow accessories using contemporary street signs in place of traditional symbols.



"Past Is Prologue: Salish Style"

38"h x 16"w x 3"d
Beadwork, mixed media
2009

Contemporary cradleboard with hidden compartments for document and photo storage.



"Past Is Prologue: Salish Style (detail)"

38"h x 16"w x 3"d
Beadwork, mixed media
2009

Detail of the fully-beaded headboard showing the center of the flowers which can move and reveal photo frames underneath.



"She Sews a Flight of Fancy"

9"h x 11"w x 11"d
Beadwork on wool
2009

This sewing box has four species of birds native to Montana, as well as traditional Lakota beadwork patterns on the exterior.



"She Sews a Flight of Fancy"

9"h x 11"w x 11"d
Beadwork on wool
2009

Image shows sewing box lid, silk interior, and fully-beaded accessories such as needle case, awl case, scissors case and pincushion.



"Molly Murphy Artist Statement"

na
na
2009

(Document)



"Molly Murphy Resume"

na
na
2009

(Document)



"Six Horses Courting Blanket"



"New Possibilities; Women Stepping Forward"



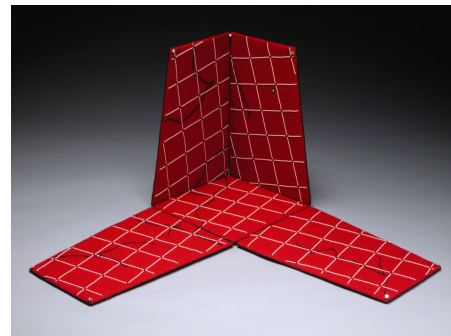
"New Possibilities Bags; Graduates"



"Night Moths"



"Trying to Find My Way Home: Lat and Long Map from Missoula to Pine Ridge"



"Trying to Find My Way Home: Lat and Long Map from Missoula to Pine Ridge (detail)"



"It's All There in Black and White"



"It's All There in Black and White (detail)"



"Molecular to Stellar"



"Molecular to Stellar (detail)"



"Flora"



"Out of a Clear Blue Sky"



"Forced North"



"Snakedance"



"Tribal Size Me III"



"Signs in Sacred Colors"



"Past Is Prologue: Salish Style"



"Past Is Prologue: Salish Style (detail)"



"She Sews a Flight of Fancy"



"She Sews a Flight of Fancy"